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# SCIENCE:

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## THE KLAMATH NATION.<sup>1</sup>

### II.—LINGUISTICS.

WHEN, early in the present century, the American languages, or rather a certain number of them, and particularly those of the Algonkian, Iroquoian, Mexican, Peruvian, and Araucanian families, became the subjects of scientific study, the first emotions which this study excited were those of surprise and pleasure. The elaborate forms, the many ingenious methods of word-composition, and the singular capacity for expression thence derived, filled the first inquirers with admiration. This admiration, expressed with the enthusiasm of discoverers, naturally awakened scepticism and adverse criticism. The criticism, originating mainly in prejudice and the pride of race, and based on that partial knowledge which is sometimes more misleading than ignorance, was for the most part unfounded and unjust. The critics objected that the American languages, being those of barbarous tribes, must necessarily be inferior to the idioms of highly civilized races, like the Aryan and Semitic nations; but they forgot that the early Aryans and Semites were themselves barbarians, and yet their languages, as we know from many facts, were as well constructed and as expressive in their era of barbarism as in that of their highest culture. The objectors also informed us that the reason why the words of the American languages were of such elaborate formation and often excessive length, was simply because the speakers, being barbarians, had not attained the analyzing power required to reduce the vocables to their component parts; but further investigations have shown that many American languages, including the Dakota, the Maya, and the Othomi tongues, are in some respects even more analytic than the Aryan, and their words generally briefer. We were further told that the American idioms had not the substantive verb, which, we were assured, was the highest expression of Aryan and Semitic analysis and abstraction. But later researches have found this verb in the Athapascans, the Sahaptins, the Klamath, and various other Indian tongues, as fully developed as in the Sanscrit or the Greek. Then we were assured that

American languages had few or no expressions for abstract ideas. We now find that some of them abound in such expressions, and have peculiar forms especially designed to indicate them. The objectors derided certain Indian languages, like the Iroquoian and the Algonkian, in which the terms of kindred must always have a possessive pronoun attached to them. How poor, they argued, must be the speech of a people who cannot say simply "father" and "son," but must always employ the composite forms, "my father," "his son," and the like. We now know that languages of this type are not universal, and that in idioms spoken by tribes lower in culture than the Algonkians and the Iroquois, the possessive pronouns are independent words, and are never attached to the nouns. Finally, these critics, all of Aryan or Semitic origin, proudly assure us that the noble races to which they belong are the only peoples whose languages are really inflected. All other idioms belong to a lower type, the "agglutinative." Their so-called inflections are simply bits of significant words, affixed to the roots, and still retaining indications of their origin. Duponceau, the first and greatest of American philologists, has long ago shown, by the evidence of the Delaware grammar, the error of this assumption; and we now have to see how completely this and most of the other objections of the worshippers of the Aryo-Semitic fetish are disproved by the results of Mr. Gatschet's careful and thorough studies.

Pure inflection, properly speaking, —that is, inflection of non-agglutinative origin,—is a change made in the substantial or radical part of a word to indicate a difference of meaning, as when the Hebrew changes the ground form of *lamar*, to learn (or "he learned"), to *lemor*, to express the imperative mood, or as when the Ojibway, to form the participle, changes *nimi*, he dances, to *namid*, dancing. In the primitive Aryan languages the most important change of this description is the reduplicative form, which in the Sanscrit, Greek, and Gothic, and occasionally in the Latin and other tongues, is used to give a preterite signification. This form of inflection occurs, with varying purport, in many American and Oceanic languages. Most generally it indicates plurality, as in the Mexican and Sahaptin idioms; but frequently it expresses (as in the Japanese and the Dakota) iteration, distribution, or other allied meanings. In the Klamath it assumes a wide development, pervading the whole language, and modifying almost all the parts of speech, from nouns and verbs even to many of the particles. Its principal functions, according to Mr. Gatschet, are iterative and distributive. But the various modifications of meaning produced by redoubling the first syllable or the first two syllables of a word, with many euphonic changes, give nice distinctions, which enrich the language to a remarkable extent. Thus from *lama*, to be dizzy, we have *lemlama*, to reel or stagger; from *palah* or *pelah*, quickly, *pelpela*, to work, to busy oneself at; from *tuéka*, to pierce, *tuektuéka*, to stare at, i.e., to pierce with the eyes; from *wita*, to blow (as the wind), *witwita*, to shake or struggle; from *mukash*, fine feathers or down of birds, *mukmukli*, downy, soft. The verb *lutatka*, to interpret, makes its frequentative mood by an abridged reduplication, *lultatka*, to interpret frequently, and hence we have the noun *lultatkuish*, a professional interpreter. So from *shiukish*, one who fights, a derivative of the verb *shiuka*, to fight, we have, by a twofold reduplication, *shishokish*, a warrior, and *shish'shokish*, a hero, one who has fought in many battles; and, in like manner, from *tamnuish*, one who is travelling (a derivative from *támenu*, to travel), we have *tatamnuish*, one who travels habitually, a stroller

<sup>1</sup> The first article—on the "Klamath Country and People"—appeared in the last number of Science. The third and concluding article—on "Klamath Mythology and General Ethnology"—will appear in the next issue.